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Approved For Release 2002/03/22 : CIA-RDP81-00314R000200060043-9

14 May 1952

PERSONNEL DIRECTOR MEMORANDUM NO. 27-52

SUBJECT: 1952 ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOCIETY FOR PERSONNEL  
ADMINISTRATION

The annual conference of the Society for Personnel Administration was held 1 and 2 May in Washington. The general theme of the conference was, "The Public's Interest in Public Personnel Administration." A general session was held in the morning and specific aspects of the topic of the general session were reviewed at panel discussions in the afternoon. Resumes of those discussions which are of particular interest to our Agency, as reported by members of the Personnel Studies Staff, are attached for your information.

GEORGE E. MELOON  
Personnel Director

Attachment

*Resubmitted by (51)  
OPM 5-130-2  
15-54 3 May 54*

DOC	43	REV DATE	5 OCT 1981	BY	029725
ORIG COMP	—	ORI	32	TYPE	01
ORIG CLASS	M	PAGES	17	REV CLASS	U
JUST	—	NEXT REV	—	AUTH	HR 70-2

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**GENERAL OPENING SESSION: Looking into the Gold-Fish Bowl.**

Harold H. Leich, Vice President of the Society and Chairman of this session, opened the conference with a brief welcoming address in which he mentioned that there had been a substantial increase in membership during the last year. Members of the Society now number over 2000 and three field chapters have recently been established.

A. The first speaker in this session was the Honorable BROOKS HAYS, Member of Congress from Arkansas, who, as a Congressman looking into the gold-fish bowl, sees as important the following points:

1. An important element of good administration is the attitude of the administrator toward the legislature and his relationships with the members of Congress. Congress must be the interpreter of the executive's actions to the public. It is the buffer or go-between of the people and the executive branch. This fact tends to be overemphasized by Congress while it is minimized by the administrators.
2. An important corollary of this point is that the administration must have the proper attitude towards the waves of economy instituted by Congress. Congressional insistence upon economical use of the tax dollar is only right and proper and responsive to the demands of the people, but the executive is in a better position to do something about it. While it is a natural desire on the part of administrators to extend and implement their programs to the fullest extent possible, it is also necessary to realize that we can't provide everything for everybody.
3. The necessity for a long range view of desirable objectives is part of the overall need, on the part of both legislators and administrators, for a perspective that will fit the small segment of effort into its proper place in relation to the total effort and the total needs of the people of the world. This need of vision is coupled with the need for a sincere desire to help the people of the world. The sense of adventure and the thrill of helping people that motivates the energetic and dedicated initiation of a new program or activity must somehow be retained as the program develops and becomes the more routine matter of enforcing or carrying out legislation.
4. The Congressman must open his eyes more widely and in so doing project himself onto the problems of the administrator. The administrator, on the other hand, must be more tolerant toward Congressmen, and not expect them to be experts.

B. Mr. Clem J. Randau, Director, Radio Station WNEW, and formerly Vice President, U. P., speaking as a citizen looking into the goldfish bowl, sees the following strengths and weakness in public personnel administration:

1. The outstanding weakness of the Civil Service is the appeals system whereby you can't get rid of the "drones" in government. It is so much easier to transfer an inefficient worker to another's payroll than to go through the three or four months procedure of getting rid of him entirely so few are actually separated.

2. The standardized government jargon that pervades every government office and precludes the possibility of comprehension by the businessman who may come into government for a six or eight months' tour of duty is another weakness of the administrative branch.

C. The next speaker was the Honorable A. S. MIKE MONRONEY, United States Senator from Oklahoma, who opened his address with a few remarks directed at those who say that the government is the place where people use personal influence to get jobs and then can never be fired once they have them. His question to them would be, "What's so wonderful about working for the Government?" Government workers are subject to constant abuse from the public due to the political nature of government. This leads to a lack of esprit de corps and lowered morale on the part of the workers. Added to this is the disadvantage of living in a "company town" where every aspect of one's personal life is liable to investigation or attack.

Some of the aspects of public personnel administration that a Senator sees on looking into the goldfish bowl are:

1. The poor effects of unwise budget cuts. Many sins are committed in the name of economy, but perhaps the worst are the so-called meat and bone cuts.

2. A poor pay schedule, which is the result of an attempt to oversimplify the problem. As it stands now, the schedule is too all-embracing. Salaries for the many Federal employees outside of Washington should be scaled to the prevailing rate of the area. This system has been most successful for the blue collar workers and should be applied to salaried workers as well. Another fault of the pay schedule is that it favors the lower grade employees at the expense of the higher, a situation which the last pay boost did nothing to correct.

3. There is need of a better promotion system. The best men leave the government because of lack of recognition from within. Those who remain are, for the most part, those who do not have the opportunity to leave.

4. A good aspect of the Civil Service is that it is a career service.

Senator Monroney closed his address with a "commercial" for the Clean Government Bill, in which it is proposed that a "blue ribbon" Civil Service be set up in the Bureau of Internal Revenue. There is a great need to restore public confidence in the Bureau, and this bill might be a step in that direction by insulating it against political intervention. This program would put an incentive system in the government service. There would be faster promotions, especially for the young men, who are apt to become discouraged when they find that their chances for getting ahead are blocked and that they must wait for some aged incumbent to either die or retire. The application of this system would require a flexible Civil Service Commission which would recognize the differences among the employees of different agencies and would permit the hand tailoring of the program to fit agency needs. As administrator of this "blue ribbon" service there should be a special assistant to the Commission who would be in charge of personnel matters in the Bureau of Internal Revenue and who would be equal in rank to the top level in the Commission.

D. The closing address of the opening session was delivered by the Honorable ROBERT RAMSPECK, Chairman, United States Civil Service Commission. Commissioner Ramspeck opened his remarks by stating that there is a need for the public to become better acquainted with the government worker and his work, since better public understanding and support are essential for better government. As one looking out from within the goldfish bowl, the Commissioner sees the Civil Service Commission providing leadership in the improvement of public personnel administration, in the following ways:

1. Extension of the activities of the Expert Examiners to the field.

2. Expansion of the Executive Development Program.

3. Expansion of the Career Development Program (formerly Administrative Intern Program)

4. Emphasis on the conservation of manpower and cooperation with the Bureau of the Budget in the preparation of Circular 44 which points out how manpower may be conserved.

5. Activities of the Inspection Division of the Commission which gives the various agencies many constructive suggestions and aids them in solving their problems.

A number of the measures which would aid in effective personnel administration in the Federal Service are dependant upon the legislature. The following are listed as the legislative goals sought by the commission in the interest of better management:

1. Revision or repeal of the Whitten amendment restricting promotions.
2. Elimination of the leave accumulation ban rider.
3. Retirement legislation and adequate appropriations by Congress to insure the integrity of the retirement fund and at the same time give employees maximum coverage.
4. Passage of the Federal Personnel Recruitment Act, which would decentralize recruitment by delegating responsibility for the performance of this function to the agencies.
5. Change in legislation limiting the number of personnel people in agencies. The needs of agencies for personnel workers vary with the point in time and the activities of the agency, as well as the number of people in the agency.

In addition to the above changes, Commissioner Ramspeck proposed that a top-flight management expert -- probably from private industry -- be employed by the Government at a salary of around \$50,000.00 a year to stimulate management efforts in Federal agencies. This person should serve on the President's staff and should be responsible for the modernization and streamlining of Government management practices. To supplement the work of this man there should be a "career business manager" in each department and agency, who would be directly under the agency head.

Commissioner Ramspeck concluded his remarks by answering a charge made by one of the other speakers (Randau) concerning the difficulty involved in separating an inefficient employee. The only thing standing between an inefficient employee and separation is the lack of courage on the part of administrators, and the problem would never come up if proper use were made of the probationary period.

Thursday, 1 May 1952

**Subject: BETTER GOVERNMENT THROUGH BETTER PEOPLE**

**PANEL DISCUSSION A: Can Government Compete Successfully for Superior People?**

**PANEL**

**Chairman: JAMES M. MITCHELL, U. S. Civil Service Commissioner**

**ALBERT J. CAREY, Asst. Deputy Administrator, Program Requirements  
Defense Production Administration.**

**VERNON D. NORTHROP, Administrative Assistant Secretary, Department of  
Labor.**

**LEONARD W. VAUGHAN, Personnel Director, George Washington University.**

**KENNETH O. WARNER, Director, Civil Service Assembly of the United States  
and Canada .**

**DISCUSSION**

At the outset, it was generally agreed that the Federal Government could not compete, paywise with private industry, for the service individuals.

The Federal Government can counterbalance this factor to a large extent by concentrating on influencing the job decisions of superior individuals by the following methods suggested by the panel:

- I Arrange to have the public schools incorporate in their civics courses details of the work performed by key personnel in specific Departments of the Federal Government. Such details should be presented in such a manner as to arouse the interest of prospective applicants for such jobs.
- II Establish better public relations with colleges and universities by:
  - A. Covering them on a year-round basis with competent recruitment personnel.
  - B. Provide the professors with a more thorough knowledge of the opportunities offered by a career with the Federal Government, by a more extensive use of their services on a paid consultant basis.

- C. Cover all conferences of College Placement Officers with qualified personnel in order to become personally acquainted with these officers and their own unique placement problems.
- D. Sell the heads of colleges and universities on the Government's vital need for superior persons.
- III Contact prospective college candidates at least by their junior year in order to provide personal guidance and advice throughout the remainder of their college year.
- IV Arrange with private industry a program for the mutual exchange of both potential and actual key personnel so that both Government and industry may have a greater understanding of the other's special problems.
- V Provide a more flexible system of personnel selection for the more important positions in the various Departments of the Government.
- VI Put into effect a vastly increased training program for Government employees in order to provide a pool of trained personnel ready to take over key jobs.
- VII Organize a public relations program aimed at informing the general public about the vital roles performed by key men in the various Departments.

Thursday, 1 May 1952

Subject: BETTER GOVERNMENT THROUGH BETTER PEOPLE

PANEL DISCUSSION B: How Can Government Motivate and Reward Superior Performance?

PANEL

Chairman: ARTHUR S. FLEMING, Asst. to the Director (Manpower),  
Office of Defense Mobilization.  
President, Ohio Wesleyan University

EDWIN N. MONTAGUE, Director of Personnel, Department of State

CHARLES F. PARKER, Organization and Methods Examiner, Bureau of the Budget

MOTTRAM P. TORRE, Psychiatrist and Personnel Consultant, Mutual Security Agency

CHARLES CUSHMAN, Personnel Administrator, State of Rhode Island,  
President, Civil Service Assembly of the United States and Canada.

NOTE. It should probably be noted that the presence of a "reward" does not always stimulate an individual to engage in "reward-pursuing" activity. If it is conceded that "reward-pursuing" activity is basically "need-satisfying" activity, it may be concluded that it is the existence of a "need" rather than the presence of a "reward" which spurs the individual to action. Hence, the task would appear to be, first of all, to recognize the basic needs of the Government employee (probably such needs are not unlike those for non-Government employee); secondly, identify the rewards which will satisfy those needs, and; third, make the rewards accessible to the Government employee.

DISCUSSION

It was suggested at the beginning of the session that the members of the panel direct their attention to the employee "on the job" rather than toward the problem of motivating citizens to seek Government employment. Nevertheless, some time was devoted to the subject of "selection" and to "What motivates people to come to work for the Government?" It was felt that an intangible "spirit of service" provides at least a partial answer to the preceding question. There is an increasing awareness of the importance of the Government in national and international affairs.



However, "tourism" was mentioned as a principal reason for entrance into the Foreign Service. Unfortunately, Foreign Service personnel usually do not do a great deal of "touring" and, consequently, the turnover rate is relatively high among Foreign Service employees.

The success of the Junior Management Assistant and Junior Professional Assistant Programs was introduced as evidence that better people are coming into the Government. It was suggested, however, that the JMA's and JPA's are, in some respects, too select. That is, they ride in on "white chargers" and soon discover that there are fewer opportunities for application of their unusual talents and energies and fewer opportunities for rapid advancement than they had anticipated.

Although the title of the session implied a preoccupation with "superior" performance, the members of the panel agreed that it must not be inferred that "inferior" performance will be tolerated or go unnoticed. As one member of the panel put it, "Every man needs a pat on the back, either high up or low down."

On the subject of employee selection, it was pointed out that too much emphasis is being placed on readily measurable skills and too little on "interests" and personality factors such as emotional stability and maturity. It was felt that "employing highly motivated personnel" did not provide a particularly adequate solution of the question being discussed, but introduction of the idea led to the general agreement that there is a need for much more work in the area of "motivation testing."

In order for "superior" performance to be rewarded, it will first be necessary to define and establish "standard" performance. This done, the employee must be convinced that superior performance will be suitably rewarded. If there is nothing to be gained from "deviation from the standard", most Government employees will be loath to so deviate. A factor to be taken into account is the effect which superior performance of the individual will have upon the group. It is not difficult for the group to resent and reject the superior individual. The question of rewarding superior employees becomes somewhat more complex when viewed in this context. The underlying morale problems which threaten to manifest themselves in "border-line" and "teacher's pet" cases is a factor to be reckoned with.

The suggestion that "too much security breeds complacency" was received with mixed feelings by the panel members and the participating audience. While it was conceded that there is an element of truth in the statement, it was pointed out that a sense of security must accompany the doing of a satisfactory job. Employees, especially those in the higher echelons, often feel insecure because they have not grown into their jobs. Understanding the job was given great emphasis. The

employee must be trained to do his job well and must understand exactly what is expected of him. There must be a clear-cut delineation of responsibility and authority and the employee must be able and "allowed" to see himself and his work in terms of the goals of the organization. Such goals must be tangible and success in their achievement must lend itself to some degree of measurement. Over-all organizational goals may be broken down into "division goals" and "unit goals". There must be informational feedback. Each employee has a right to be aware of his successes as well as his failures. There must be positive as well as negative recognition. It must be sincere recognition. No one is fooled by "soft soaping."

Inevitably, the important role of the supervisor received considerable attention. Too often, supervisors are chosen on the basis of their technical competence with little or no regard for administrative ability. It was generally agreed that the supervisor is probably in the best position to stimulate the employee to perform in a superior fashion, although it is only the exceptional supervisor who does so. Why? Poor supervisory selection has been mentioned. Lack of "motivation to motivate" is no doubt equally important. This function of supervision has not been given proper emphasis. Top management has failed to place any premium, as far as the supervisor is concerned, on "employee recognition." It was pointed out that the ability to recognize superior performance is as important as the performance itself. (Active, not passive, recognition is meant here). This ability should be considered at the time of supervisory selection, encouraged, and rewarded by top management.

Incentive Awards Programs did not fare too well at the hands of several members of the audience. Awards available to the ambitious employee fall into three general categories, i. e., incentive awards, superior accomplishment awards, and management improvement awards. There was no discussion of the various types of awards, as such, but the audience, many members of which had had first-hand experience with programs in their own agencies, reacted rather vehemently to the suggestion that the Incentive Awards Program constitutes a satisfactory stimulus to superior performance. It was pointed out that the statutes which authorize the programs are ambiguous and overlapping. Awards for identical service may vary widely depending upon which statute the award is based. Instructions to operating officials are complicated and difficult to understand. The administration of the plan in itself tends to create morale problems since processing of a suggestion or recommended award usually takes so much time that the employee becomes impatient and hostile and tends to lose any vestige of faith in the program. In some instances, the programs tend to be paternalistic. In a case cited, an agency periodically requests its supervisors to submit the names of employees who deserve to be rewarded for superior performance. It is then necessary for the supervisor to "pick" an employee whose work has

been "somewhat better" than the work of the other employees. Naturally, this situation leads to resentment on the part of the employees who are not chosen for the award. It seems doubtful whether the advantages of recognizing the work of a single employee outweighs, in this situation, the disadvantages of failing to recognize the others.

The "performance rating" also received attention, but did not stand up much better than did the Incentive Awards Programs. It was quickly pointed out that the performance Rating Act of 1950 is much better known for what it "un-did" than for what it "did". Presumably, employees will strive for a rating of "Outstanding", but the existing law, with the help of the Civil Service Commission Regulations, requires such a complicated and time-consuming procedure incident to giving this rating that few supervisors are prone to involve themselves in it. It was also pointed out that only a superhuman employee could qualify for the award in the first place.

Conclusion. Adequate use is not being made of the tools at our disposal.

**Subject: BETTER GOVERNMENT THROUGH BETTER PEOPLE**

**PANEL DISCUSSION C: - Does Government Need a Career Executive Pool?**

**PANEL**

**Chairman: John J. Corson, McKinsey and Company, Management Consultants.**

**G. Lyle Belsley, Assistant Administrator for Industry Advisory Committee, National Production Authority.**

**Harold Stein, Director, Committee on Public Administration Cases.**

**Luther C. Steward, President, National Federation of Federal Employees.**

**Earl P. Strong, Director of Executive Development, U. S. Civil Service Commission.**

**DISCUSSION**

The first question to be answered is how many executives are needed each year? For purposes of this discussion, executives will be considered as those in grades GS-14 and above. There are the following numbers serving under the Classification Act in those grades at the present time:

GS-14	7,030
GS-15	3,168
GS-16	522
GS-17	218
GS-18	<u>86</u>
Total	11,044

About one half of one percent of the total number of Federal employees fall in this category. The replacement rate in these positions is about 12 per cent a year, considering only complete separations and disregarding transfers. This means that there must be an intake of about 1300 executives each year. This turnover rate, while not high compared with industry, is a real incentive in government. It is a healthy thing in that it means a periodic injection of new brains and new ideas. However, there is a definite need for a new method of planning for replacement of top executive talent. In the past this has been left too much to chance. A promotion was caught like the itch in school - by sitting next to it.

There is a great variation in the characteristics needed by different agencies for their top executive jobs. This difference is not so much between the classified service and appointments since there is a strong movement upward as more and more appointments tend to be made from within the career service. These needs are occasioned more by the nature of the agency, as, for example, a different set of talents are needed by a Secretary of State from those required by an administrator in the FEPC.

Needs vary in time. In the beginning of the life of an agency or program there are needed people of great initiative and vision, and possibly persons of great personal prestige, whereas, when the administration of the law or statute becomes more routine, these qualifications may not be needed to the same extent that they originally were.

As part of a plan for preparing for a supply of operating executives, there must be an overall program for evaluation, a constant search for "promotables" and a program which will give them an opportunity to expand. This would include movement across agency line. Only when there is no adequate person in the entire Federal establishment should outside talent be brought in. There is at the present time a great overemphasis on the necessity for going outside, especially when the problem of staffing a new agency arises. This is a problem which is constantly recurring, and which always will be. However, it would seem to present an excellent opportunity for the establishment and development of an overall policy to find out what is on hand in the way of "promotables" inside the government, then to begin looking for the necessary qualifications on the outside. While it is undoubtedly true that there may be a series of executive jobs for which the career program does not logically prepare people, there is also a decided overstatement of the need for technical knowledge. This special knowledge can be limited to a few in the organization rather than having a whole complement of executives with complete technical knowledge.

There are two phases of executive development. The first is the vertical phase, occasioned by movement from bottom to top within the agency structure. The second is horizontal movement or development. This second phase is healthy and normal and should take the form of a constant interchange of executive talent across agency lines. It is present to a great extent in industry.

There are many problems in working out a program of horizontal movement. The first problem is enticing people already in the top grades away from their present job into another which may be in a new temporary agency, or even in a supposedly permanent agency or program. Their reluctance is understandable. The new agency may fight a losing battle for survival, the job at the old agency may be no longer available, and the person will be in the uncomfortable position of being forced to turn to his friends for help in finding a suitable opening.

Friday, 2 May 1952

**Subject: DEVELOPING A SCIENCE OF MANAGING PEOPLE**

**PANEL DISCUSSION B: How to Apply Personnel Research Findings**

**PANEL**

**Chairman: HERBERT E. EVANS, Vice President - Personnel, Farm Bureau Insurance Companies.**

**PAUL D. BANNING, Chief Disbursing Officer, U. S. Treasury Department.**

**RALPH D. BENNETT, Technical Director, Naval Ordnance Laboratory.**

**MERIDETH P. CRAWFORD, Director, Human Resources Office, Department of the Army.**

**MILTON HALL, Assistant Director of Personnel, Federal Security Agency.**

**DISCUSSION**

Application of personnel research findings is, at the present time, more difficult than most personnel technicians realize. The difficulty appears to stem from the fact that the average operating official does not have the time or facility to ferret out useful information from the bulk of personnel research material which passes across his desk; the findings are too vague and theoretical and couched in the language of the research analyst rather than in terms easily understood and useful to the operating official; the research is often based on an "ivory tower" analysis of operation problems; research findings often conflict with the basic mores of the operating official (e. g., women are as capable as men) and have little chance of practical application.

If research is going to be of any value to the operating official, the research analyst must come down out of his tower and work directly with and in the situation in which his findings are to be applied. The young Ph. D. must set aside his "theory" and examine the practical aspects of the situation. This is true in personnel research where it is not necessarily the case when dealing with "things" rather than with "people." The one is too often mistaken for the other. Personnel research performed in an operating situation is further complicated by the need but lack of opportunity for adequate control in the situation under study. During World War II, the Department of the Army was able to

make substantial progress in many areas of personnel research because at that time there was an opportunity to work with groups of statistically significant size in more or less controlled situations. This opportunity does not present itself too often, however.

Personnel research is usually valid when applicable to groups, but begins to lose its validity and value, as far as operating people are concerned, when the need arises to apply the findings to an individual case. What is true of "Administrative Assistants" in general, may be of little worth in dealing with John Doe, a "particular" Administrative Assistant.

It was felt that either (1) the research man must translate his findings into terms which will be useful to the operating official or (2) the operating must educate himself in the "jargon" of the research group. A solution will probably require a better understanding and appreciation by both groups of the work of the other. Better use of staff men by operating officials was suggested as another means of breaching the gap. The effective staff aid should separate the wheat from the chaff and present the useful personnel research material to his chief in a form which will be readily understood.

A program must be developed under the guidance of the Civil Service Commission whereby:

1. Executive talent will be identified.
2. This talent will then be trained and developed.
3. This talent will be known throughout the Federal establishment and there will be a wide chance for movement.
4. There will be promotion and movement across agency lines to a much greater extent than there is now.
5. Salaries should be paid between assignments or in the periods when a person is in the process of transfer from one agency to another.
6. There should be immunity from reduction in force.
7. This policy should apply to overseas personnel as well.

A program like this would have to work both ways. If the government is going to provide all of these benefits to these people, there must be some guarantee that when an emergency arises and a certain type of talent is needed in a certain place the person who possesses the type of talent needed will be available. In other words, complete mobility in service depends upon the acceptance of government employment without reservation. It implies a focal point from which executives are dispatched to all points of the world, whenever and wherever the need arises. There might be difficulties involved in finding people who were willing to accept such unconditional employment. However, the advantages would be considerable to the individual and would perhaps serve to attract a sufficient number of high caliber executive talent. Such a system works very satisfactorily for the British, who have a central core of "established" civil servants whose tenure is absolutely secure, but who accept employment unconditionally. We have such a "career corps" in the Foreign Service, so even for us the expansion of this idea to include the entire Federal Government would not be without precedent.

Closing Session:

Address: Frances Perkins, U. S. Civil Service Commissioner

"A Public Service Responsible to the Public"

Personnel management must be considered an art rather than an exact science, because you are dealing with people and "people" implies individuals. Individuals cannot be successfully measured in every respect, or their behavior predicted. Therefore, people as individuals, cannot be managed by a set of rules and regulations which will cover every exigency, but must be trained and managed through contact with other people, by example, and by precept. Unfortunately, the trend for the



last several decades has been to do everything according to regulation. Administrators spend hours drafting the exact wording of a new set of rules, and lose sight of the fact that this one set of rules is attempting to cover the behavior and the reasons behind the behavior, of large numbers of individuals who differ from each other in as many ways.

Somehow we must provide for greater delegation of authority. Different people approach a problem differently. If we choose good, intelligent people who know the overall objectives of a program, we should permit them to achieve these objectives in the way that is best for them. It would probably be more efficient and effective in the long run than trying to force them to operate along set lines that may be at complete variance with their most effective ways of working.

This attempt on the part of personnel administrators to fit the same shoe to several million feet is only another symptom of the prevailing illness of our times -- the passing of individuality. There are other indications: the uniformity of dress, of taste in entertainment and literature, and even of goals and ideas of what constitutes success. People eat, drink, wear, and even think, the same things.

One of the more insidious forms of this disease is the application of the rule "everybody does it" to activities. This stems in part from the lack of any attempt on the part of our school systems and institutions of higher education to teach young people to distinguish between right and wrong. In the absence of any better criteria, the only measure people are left with is what other people are doing.

Our strength as a nation, our inventive genius and ingenuity, came from a differentiation of people. The end product of this trend toward uniformity can only be a mass nervous breakdown or mass mediocrity.

Somehow we must get the best people in government. To do this we must develop for ourselves new techniques to aid us in the estimate of character. Perhaps if we convince the educators that strength of character is a marketable commodity, they will ultimately put it back in the curriculum.